

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

AF-10 EUR-25 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

ACDA-19 OPR-02 USSS-00 SY-10 OC-06 DRC-01 /162 W

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O P 161604Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4770

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 12183

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS, US

SUBJECT: LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEW RE US POLICY IN ME

SUMMARY: IN TOW-HOUR MEETING (HELD AT HIS REQUEST) WITH ME OCT 16, PRIMIN SOLH EXPRESSED IN FRIENDLY BUT VERY CONCERNED TONES HIS SORROW AND DISQUIET OVER SITUATION IN ME. HE OUTLINED ADVERSE EFFECT WHICH HE BELIEVES US STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS HAVE HAD ON THAT SITUATION AND VOICED FEAR THAT IF CURRENT TRENDS CONTINUE THEY WILL CAUSE IRREPARABLE DAMAGE TO ARAZ-AMERICAN RELATIONS, US POSITION IN ME, AND AMERICAN INTERESTS IN LEBANON. PRIMIN URGED USG ACT BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE TO ASSURE ARABS THAT US POLICIES ARE NOT TOTALLY DEVOTED TO SUPPORT OF ISRAEL AND ITS CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF ARAB TERRITORIES, REGARDLESS OF JUSTICE OF ARAB CLAIMS. I ASSURED HIM USG ACTIONS AND DECLARATIONS MOTIVATED SOLELY BY DESIRE ACHIEVE EARLIEST POSSIBLE END TO HOSTILITIES AND OBTAIN RAPID PROGRESS TOWARD NEGOTIATED PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

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1. PRIMIN OPENED MEETING WITH LENGTHY HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF ME CONFLICT, NOTING THAT ARABS--AFTER STRIVING FOR

DECADES TO RESIST FIRST EUROPEAN COLONIAL AND LATER ISRAELI DOMINATION OF ME--HAVE FINALLY MADE REAL STRIDES IN ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RESPECT. SITUATION IN ME, HE SAID, WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME, REGARDLESS OF OUTCOME OF CURRENT HOSTILITIES, SINCE ALL MYTHS AND PREMISES FORMERLY ACCEPTED AS FACTORS IN ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE HAD IRREVOCABLY BEEN CHANGED AND EVEN REVERSED. WHILE EVENTS OF PAST TEN DAYS HAD COME AS SURPRISE TO MANY PEOPLE, ARABS ARE NOW UNITED, DEFIANT, CONFIDENT AND DETERMINED NOT TO ALLOW CONTROL OF THEIR DESTINY SLIP FROM THEIR HANDS IN FUTURE.

2. IN THIS SITUATION, PRIMIN SAID, HE SADDENED AND DISTURBED BY SIGNS THAT USG CONTINUES ALLOW ITS ME POLICIES BE DICTATED BY OUTDATED ESTIMATES OF TRENDS AND CONDITIONS IN ARAB WORLD. HE SAW US ME POLICY SINCE 1948 AS CHAIN OF MISTAKES AND MISJUDGMENTS RESULTING FROM FAULTY ESTIMATES OF ARAB POTENTIALITIES AND OVER-RELIANCE ON ISRAELI POWER TO ACT AS GUARDIAN OF US INTERESTS IN ME. THIS MAY HAVE HAD LITTLE IMPACT OF US INTERESTS AS LONG AS ARABS REMAINED DIVIDED, CONFUSED AND RIDDLED WITH FEELINGS OF INFERIORITY, BUT EVENTS ARE NOW CONSPIRING TO ROB USG OF THESE ADVANTAGES. PRIMIN POINTED TO US POSITION IN SC (IN PARTICULAR US PROPOSAL FOR CEASEFIRE LINKED WITH RETURN OF FORCES TO ORIGINAL CEASEFIRE LINES), RECENT STATEMENTS BY PRES NIXON AND SECRETARY, AND US DECISION RE ARMS RESUPPLY TO ISRAEL AS INDICATIONS USG STILL DOES NOT APPRECIATE HOW MUCH CONDITIONS IN ME HAVE CHANGED AND HOW MUCH ITS INTERESTS IN ARAB WORLD ARE IN JEOPARDY.

3. PRIMIN ASKED USG TO IMAGINE HOW ARAB MAN-IN-STREET FEELS WHEN HE HEARS OF US ANNOUNCEMENT PROVIDE REPLACEMENT ARMS TO ISRAEL OR WHEN HE READS THAT US POLICY IN CURRENT HOSTILITIES IS AKIN TO ITS POLICIES RE LEBANON IN 1958 OR JORDAN IN 1970. HOW THEN CAN USG EXPECT PRESERVE ANY CREDIBILITY IN ARAB EYES--REGARDLESS OF THEIR IDEOLOGICAL ATTACHMENTS--BY SUPPLYING ARMS TO ISRAEL AT THIS CRITICAL MOMENT? NOTING REFERENCE TO NEED
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TO PREVENT "DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL," PRIMIN ASKED WHAT USG CONSTRUED TO BE ISRAEL'S "DESTRUCTION." DID LOSS OF GOLAN OR SINAI ENTAIL "DESTRUCTION?" HE POINTED OUT NEITHER EGYPT NOR SYRIA, IN COURSE OF CURRENT HOSTILITIES, HAS VOICED AIM OF DESTROYING ISRAEL, THEIR SOLE GOAL BEING TO REGAIN TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 WAR AFTER SIX YEARS OF FUTILE ATTEMPTS TO REGAIN THEM BY PEACEFUL MEANS. USG, HE SAID, SHOULD NOT NOW CRITICIZE ARABS FOR RESORTING TO FORCE AFTER IT PROVED UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO INFLUENCE "ARROGANT, INTRANSIGENT"

ISRAEL--DESPITE REPEATED ARAB CONCESSIONS RE RECOGNITION
OF ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE AND READINESS TO LIVE IN PEACE
WITH HER AS STIPULATED BY SC RES 242 -- TO GIVE UP
OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN RETURN FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

4. PRIMIN NOTED THAT US POLICIES, HAVING LONG SINCE CAUSED
ENMITY AND BITTERNESS AMONG RADICAL ARAB GOVTS, ARE
NOW SADDENING AND EMBARRASSING THOSE ARABS WHO HAD
STRIVEN MAINTAIN FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH US. EVEN KING
FAISAL, HE SAID, HAS BEEN OBLIGED ALLY HIMSELF WITH
EXTREMIST SYRIANS AND IRAQIS IN CURRENT CONFRONTATION.
IF RULER SO STRONG AND SECURE AS FEISAL MUST DO THIS,
HOW CAN SUCH SMALL AND WEAK NATIONS LIKE LEBANON
RESIST SAME TREND? PRIMIN NOTED ARAB EUPHORIA OVER
RECENT MILITARY SUCCESSES AGAINST ISRAEL HAS SWEEPED UP
NORMALLY PRO-WESTERN LEADERS ALL OVER ARAB WORLD. EVEN
IN LEBANON, HE SAID, SUCH PEOPLE ARE TRANSFIXED BY
SUCCESS ACHIEVED BY SAM MISSILES AND ARE BEGINNING TO
ASK WHY GOL CANNOT NOW OBTAIN SIMILARLY EFFECTIVE ARMS
IN ORDER DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST AN ENEMY WHO VIOLATES
LEBANESE AIRSPACE WITH IMPUNITY. HE SAID ALL MEMBERS
OF CABINET YESTERDAY WERE SUGGESTING LEBANON ACQUIRE
SAM'S FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES AGAINST ISRAELI OVERFLIGHTS.
SOLH FEARED US WAS RAPIDLY LOSING WHAT MIGHT BE LAST
CHANCE TO PRESERVE ITS INTERESTS AND INFLUENCE IN
ARAB WORLD FROM IRREPARABLE HARM. GOL SINCERELY WISHED
AVOID BEING CAUGHT UP IN ME CONFLICT AND ENGAGING IN
CONFRONTATION WITH US, HE SAID, BUT US POLICIES ARE
RENDERING THIS PROSPECT INCREASINGLY LIKELY. IF USG
HAS REASONS FOR ALLOWING THIS TO HAPPEN, WELL
AND GOOD, BUT HE PERSONALLY COULD NOT COMPREHEND THEM.
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HE CONCLUDED BY REQUESTING I TRANSMIT HIS VIEWS TO
USG, HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT WASHINGTON WOULD APPRECIATE
URGENT NEED TO DEMONSTRATE--IN THOUGHT AND DEED--SOME
UNDERSTANDING FOR ARAB VIEWPOINT AT THIS CRUCIAL STATE
OF ME EVENTS.

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ACTION NEA-12

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AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

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5. I THANKED PRIMIN FOR FRANK EXPOSE OF GOL CONCERNS. I EMPHASIZED REPEATEDLY THAT CENTRAL PILLAR OF US ME POLICY REMAINS THAT OF PROMOTING JUST AND PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF ME CONFLICT AND THAT OUR ACTIONS--INCLUDING OUR POSITION IN UNSC AND DECISION UNDERTAKE RESUPPLY OF ARMS TO ISRAEL-- ARE AIMED AT ACHIEVING THIS GOAL. I URGED HIM TO READ RECENT US OFFICIAL STATEMENTS IN THIS CONTEXT, NOTING PRES NIXON'S EMPHASIS ON DESIRE TO PLAY ROLE AS PEACEMAKER. I CALLED HIS ATTENTION TO EFFORTS OVER PERIOD OF MANY DAYS TO EXERCISE UTMOST CAUTION AND RESTRAINT IN US PRONOUNCEMENTS AND ACTIONS VIS-A-VIS CURRENT HOSTILITIES, BUT NOTED THAT SUCH RESTRAINT, DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS AND HOPES, HAD SADLY NOT BEEN MATCHED BY SIMILAR BEHAVIOR ON PART OF SOVS. MASSIVE SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS TO SYRIA AND EGYPT CONSISTING OF OVER 280 FLIGHTS WITH 4,000 TONS HAD FINALLY FORCED US ACT TO REDRESS MILITARY BALANCE IN ME. SUCH DECISION WAS SURELY A PAINFUL ONE AND AN ACT WHICH WE WOULD REATHER HAVE NOT BEEN FORCED TO TAKE BUT WHICH WAS ESSENTIAL UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. I ASKED WHETHER ANY FAIR-MINDED ARAB GOVT WOULD HAVE EXPECTED
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US TO STAND IDLY BY IN FACE SUCH SITUATION; SHOULD WE HAVE WAITED UNTIL SOVIET AIRLIFT REACHED 500 FLIGHTS OR 1,000 FLIGHTS? IT SEEMED TO ME WE HAD SHOWN GREATEST PATIENCE AND RESTRAINT. I POINTED OUT USG HAS DELIBERATELY DOWNPLAYED QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR CURRENT HOSTILITIES, DESPITE FACT WE KNOW EGYPT AND SYRIA STARTED THEM, IN INTEREST OF MAINTAINING CLIMATE CONDUCIVE TO

ESTABLISHMENT OF MORE STABLE AREA PEACE WHEN FIGHTING FINALLY ENDS. I ASSURED PRIMIN THAT ALTHOUGH OUR EFFORTS TO GAIN CEASEFIRE AND PRESERVE CONDITIONS ESSENTIAL FOR NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT HAVE UNFORTUNATELY NOT PRODUCED MUCH PROGRESS THUS FAR, THOSE EFFORTS ARE CONTINUING AND WE REMAIN ALIVE TO VITAL NECESSITY OF ENSURING THEIR SUCCESS.

6. PRIMIN AGREED WITH ME THAT IT WAS FUTILE TO INDULGE IN RECRIMINATIONS OVER MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN SIX YEARS THAT FOLLOWED JUNE 1967. HE HOPED FUTURE EFFORTS TO GAIN IMPLEMENTATION OF SC RES 242 WOULD PRODUCE BETTER RESULTS, SINCE OTHERWISE HE ENVISAGED CONTINUING DRIFT TOWARD VICIOUSNESS AND RECURRENT WAR IN ME, WITH US INTERESTS SUFFERING ALONG WITH PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED. TO MY REPLY THAT THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT WE ARE TRYING HARD TO AVOID, PRIMIN APPEALED FOR USG TO MAKE SOME PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF ITS DESIRE FOR JUST PEACE THAT DID NOT APPEAR TO ARABS AS MERE TACTIC DESIGNED TO SUPPORT ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ARAB TERRITORIES SEIZED IN JUNE WAR. TO HIS CONTENTION THAT NEITHER ARABS NOR SOVS REALLY DESIRED LIQUIDATION OF STATE OF ISRAEL, I ASKED HIM TO REFLECT WHETHER ANY ARAB LEADER--IN HYPOTHETICAL SITUATION IN WHICH ARAB ARMIES WERE ADVANCING VICTORIOUSLY THROUGH OCCUPIED TERRITORIES--WOULD BE ABLE TO STAND UP AGAINST PRESSURES FROM ARAB GOVTS AND MASSES FOR CONQUEST OF ISRAEL PROPER. PRIMIN DID NOT ANSWER MY QUESTION, REMARKING ONLY THAT RESUPPLY OF ARMS TO ISRAEL AT THIS JUNCTURE COULD ONLY BE CONSTRUED BY ARABS AS SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI RETENTION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

7. IN CONCLUSION, PRIMIN ASSURED ME GOL, AND HE PERSONALLY, WOULD SPARE NO EFFORT PROTECT US INTERESTS IN LEBANON, CONFIDENTIAL

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REGARDLESS OF FUTURE COURSE OF CURRENT HOSTILITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN ME. HE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT POPULAR FEELING AGAINST US GENERATED BY WHAT ALL ARABS GENUINELY REGARD AS AMERICAN PARTIALITY TO ISRAEL IN RECENT DAYS IS "LAPPING AT MY DOOR" AND THAT POPULAR WRATH MIGHT SOON INCREASE TO POINT BEYOND ANYONE'S ABILITY TO CONTROL. HE AGAIN URGED IN STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS THAT USG MAKE SOME PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF ITS DESIRE TO MAINTAIN POLITICAL BALANCE BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAEL, SIMILAR TO MANNER IN WHICH WE HAVE INDICATED OUR DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN MILITARY BALANCE. HE SUGGESTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT US NOW PUBLICLY REAFFIRM ITS PREVIOUS POSITION THAT DURABLE PEACE NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT, ON THE ONE HAND, ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM TERRITORIES OCCUPIED

IN 1967.

8. I THANKED SOLH FOR HIS PART EFFORTS (WHICH IN RECENT DAYS HAVE BEEN ACTIVE AND STRENUOUS) TO PROTECT US INTERESTS HERE, AND ASSURED HIM THAT OUR POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC ENERGIES ARE BEING UTILIZED TO THE UTMOST IN CAUSE OF SECURING CEASEFIRE ON TERMS BEST CALCULATED TO FOSTER NEGOTIATIONS AIMED AT CONCLUSION AT JUST AND STABLE PEACE IN ME. BUFFUM

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